
Press Release

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May 2, 2018

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SCAG's 2018 Regional Conference Focuses on Adapting to Change Two-Day Gathering – 'Southern California at a Crossroads' – Opens Tomorrow in Indian Wells

Indian Wells, Calif. – More than 850 civic leaders from throughout Southern California are convening this week for an annual conference of the region's cities and counties, which will share strategies and data on pressing issues ranging from harnessing new transportation technologies to the rise of online shopping and impact on traditional retail, to building resilience to natural disasters.

The 53rd Annual Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) Regional Conference and General Assembly, happening May 3-4, at the Renaissance Indian Wells Resort & Spa, is bringing together leaders from government, business and education under the theme, "Southern California at a Crossroads." SCAG, the nation's largest metropolitan planning organization, represents 191 cities, six counties and more than 18 million people.

"This is a time of transition and change – commuters are spending over 100 hours a year stuck in traffic and we have a severe housing affordability crisis," said SCAG President Margaret Finlay, a Duarte City Council member. "Bringing together experts and leaders from across Southern California allows us to share knowledge and move new solutions forward."

Addressing key regional issues will be a major theme of the 2018 conference. Panel sessions scheduled for Thursday and Friday will address major opportunities and challenges for the region. These include:

- *At a Crossroads: Our Transportation Future.* This panel session will look at key challenges facing Southern California's transportation system, including falling transit and rising congestion, and outline a range of core strategies to implement to address these issues, and highlight innovative approaches cities and counties are pursuing.
- *Safeguarding Your Economy – How to Build Resilience.* This panel of experts, including seismologist Dr. Lucy Jones, will discuss what we can do to prevent future natural hazards from becoming major economic disasters, and how cities and utilities can mitigate the many risks to the region's infrastructure and economy, including earthquakes and fires.
- *Private Sector Innovation, Mobility for the Public.* This session will bring together representatives from Bird, Southern California Edison, Southern California Gas Company, Tesla and Waymo to discuss how Southern California can harness new transportation technologies to manage a growing population, address worsening congestion and meet statewide greenhouse gas reduction goals. This panel will advise governments on how they can best work with the private sector to prepare for and support new mobility innovations.

- *The Retail Revolution – How Cities can Adapt to the Latest Economic Trends* As e-commerce overtakes brick-and-mortar retail, cities have had to face decreasing sales tax revenues and underperforming retail centers. This panel will investigate how local governments can adapt to the shifting economy and utilize new partnerships, practices, and programs to meet these current challenges.
- *Yes, We're In a Housing Crisis. Now What?* Southern California's housing crisis is one of the region's most urgent challenges. Our shortage of affordable housing hurts the region's residents and hampers its economy, but it is still difficult for communities to increase the supply of housing locally. This panel will discuss particular challenges that communities have faced in getting more housing built and highlight best practices that participants can replicate in their local communities.
- *Show me the Money: Funding Transportation.* Southern California's transportation investment needs are significant, and as we look to the future a major question looms: How will we pay for it? A panel of CEOs of California's statewide transportation agencies will investigate the region's options for funding essential infrastructure improvements, and the future of transportation funding in the state.

The 2018 Regional Conference and General Assembly wraps up on Friday, May 4. Full details on the conference program are available online: <http://scag.ca.gov/ga2018>

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About SCAG

SCAG is the nation's largest metropolitan planning organization, representing six counties, 191 cities and more than 18 million residents. SCAG undertakes a variety of planning and policy initiatives to plan for a livable and sustainable Southern California now and in the future. For more information about SCAG's regional efforts, please visit www.scag.ca.gov.